

**Invasion of the Dotted Chestnuts *Conistra rubiginea* (D.& S.)**

It seems worth placing on record the apparent first signs of a colonisation of the south-eastern corner of England by the Dotted Chestnut *Conistra rubiginea*. In his book *Larger Moths of Surrey* (1997), Graham Collins remarked that this moth was "... most regularly on the heaths of the Bagshot Beds, and less commonly on other heaths and woodland in central and south-western Surrey. Occasional examples appear further east and may represent attempts to increase the species' range". In my own book *Larger Moths of the London Area* (1993) I listed a few records in the Surrey portion of the metropolis, but noted none for the Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire or Buckinghamshire portions, and none at all for the entire of the Middlesex vice county. Recently however, the moth appears to have spread into all of these vice counties except for Middlesex. Records to hand are as follows:

**West Kent (VC 16)** Darenth Wood, one on 18 April 1997 (D. Rolfe) – apparently the first ever Kent record; Petts Wood, 29 April 1998 (1 ♀) and 11 March 1999 (1 ♀) (D. O'Keefe); Shorne Country Park, one on 2 March 2002 (R. Kiddie); Sevenoaks, one on 4 March 2002 (K. Palmer); Bexley, one on 24 March 2002 (I. Brydon).

**North Essex (VC 19):** Great Dunmow, one on 12 March 2002 (D. Perry) – the first ever Essex record (there are no records for VC 18).

**Hertfordshire (VC 20):** Long Marston (Tring), one on 28 March 1998 (A. Bernard) – first ever Hertfordshire record; Lemsford Springs, Welwyn, 3 April 2002, a slightly worn gravid female (C. W. Plant).

**Berkshire (VC 22):** Pucketty Farm, Faringdon, one 22 March 2002 (M. V. Corley); Appleford, near Abingdon, one 22 March 2002 (R. Lewington).

**Buckinghamshire (VC 24):** Langley, near Slough, one 1991 (R. Hayward) – first county record for about a hundred years; Little Frieth, near Marlow, singletons 8 April 2000 and 3 April 2002 (A. Gudge); Radnage, near Stokenchurch, 16 October 2000 (A. M. George); Turville Heath, near Stokenchurch, 2 April 2002 (T. Harman).

There remain no Middlesex records – though since there are now records from all the surrounding counties it is surely inconceivable that the moth is not there also? Records from other county areas would be welcomed so that the spread of this species (if that is what it is) can be placed on record.

I am most grateful to the various county moth recorders for supplying me with information so that it could all be contained in a single Note: Brian Goodey (Essex), Martin Albertini (Buckinghamshire), David Agassiz, Ian Ferguson and Denis O'Keefe (Kent) and to the original observers for permission to quote their records. – COLIN W. PLANT, 14 West Road, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3QP (E-mail: Colinwplant@ntlworld.com).